

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

by

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CHAPTER NINE

The Ark of the Covenant

TODAY WE STEP WITH SPECIAL REVERENCE AND HOLY awe beyond the Veil, the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and behold the holiest of all the furnishings of the Tabernacle.

We look at that spot which in Old Testament days was the holiest place on earth - the Holy of Holies, where we find the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, the Cherubim, and the Shekinah Glory.

The reason for this sanctity was that at the Ark of the Covenant GOD's presence was locally manifest, for we read in Exodus 25:22, "**And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat . . .**"

You may wonder about the exact meaning of the word "**ark.**" The word carries with it the idea of *a chest for the safe-keeping of cherished articles.*

Thus the Ark contained the two tables of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded - articles most cherished because they signified GOD's mighty, miraculous deeds on Israel's behalf. [79]

ITS DETAILS PICTURE CHRIST'S PERSON AND WORK

This Ark, or chest, was made of acacia wood, Exodus 25:10.

Acacia wood is a very hard and close-grained wood which was found in and around Mount Sinai.

Note that GOD did not command Moses to make the Ark out of the cedars of Lebanon, or out of the oak or gopherwood of Palestine, for that would have meant a long wait while an arduous

journey was made to procure these woods. Instead, the Lord had them make the Ark out of acacia wood, the common wood of the desert where they were encamped. So likewise GOD did not send us His Son in the form of an archangel, or in some body belonging to another realm; rather, He sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be as a man upon the earth.

Instead of our having to go to Him, GOD came to where we are.

Being as we are, CHRIST has known the sufferings, sorrows, and temptations which are the lot of our daily life. How wonderful it is to have as our Mediator One Who has experienced the problems we constantly face! [80]

As for its size, this Ark of the Covenant was about three feet six inches long, two feet six inches wide and two feet six inches deep.

The acacia wood of the Ark was overlaid with gold on both its inside and outside. However, there was no wood in the lid of the Ark, for this was the Mercy Seat, which was made of pure gold. Hence, the Ark was composed of two materials, wood and gold, and this calls to our minds the fact that CHRIST is both human and divine - He is one Person having both a human and divine nature.

The common acacia wood of the desert points to His essential humanity, while the gold points to His Deity.

How wonderful to have One as our Mediator Who is also very GOD of very GOD!

At both ends of the Mercy Seat there was a Cherub made of gold.

These Cherubim faced each other with their wings outstretched, covering the Mercy Seat. Thus they were to be seen looking forward and down, their gaze meeting at the middle of the Mercy Seat. And beloved, this is most significant, because it was on the center of the Mercy Seat that the blood was applied each year when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

If the Cherubim's attention was constantly focused upon the shed blood of sacrificial animals in Old Testament times, how much more should our attention be centered upon the Cross, where CHRIST's blood made atonement for our sins!

Like Paul of old we should say, "**... God forbid that I should glory save in the cross . . . I determine to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified**" (Galatians 6:14; I Corinthians 2:2). [81]

The Shekinah Glory hovered over the Mercy Seat.

This Shekinah Glory was a local manifestation of the very presence of GOD, and since this presence was located between the Cherubim over the place where the shed blood was applied, we see once again the fact that it is impossible to come into the presence of GOD unless one comes to the Cross of CHRIST, humbly admitting his sin, his inability to save himself, and

trusting completely in the finished work of CHRIST.

For in Exodus 25:22 GOD says, "**And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony . . .**"

Hence, we can meet and commune with GOD only at the place where atonement has been made by shed blood.

IT PICTURES GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER

Having now understood something of the details of the Ark of the Covenant, let us consider what the Ark, including the Mercy Seat and the Cherubim, symbolized to Israel.

We can understand this by noting how the presence or absence of the Ark affected the fortunes of Israel.

First of all, let us consider the first real journey of the Ark of the Covenant recorded in Numbers 10:33: "**And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey [how sweet - listen] to search out a resting place for them.**" [82]

While still at Mount Sinai, Moses had said to the Lord that he did not want to continue having the crushing responsibility of leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land unless GOD's presence continued to go with him to give him rest (Exodus 33:14, 15).

GOD's answer to the need of Moses and the children of Israel was the Ark of the Covenant, which, in conjunction with the fiery, cloudy pillar, was the means by which GOD's presence went with them to lead them and give them rest. Through His presence in the Ark of the Covenant, GOD guided Israel through her wilderness journeyings, and thus the Ark points to CHRIST Who, when He putteth forth His sheep, goes before, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice (John 10:4).

Today CHRIST gives rest to those who have entrusted themselves to Him.

Friend of mine, do you know the rest and perfect peace that CHRIST alone can give as He guides you through this troubled world?

But the Ark of the Covenant was also the means by which the power of GOD was manifested to the children of Israel.

Upon arrival at Kadesh-barnea, spies were sent ahead to search out the Promised Land, so that the best strategy for conquering it could be found. [83]

However, when the twelve spies returned, ten of them were so despondent with unbelief that they caused all of Israel to be so discouraged that they refused to follow GOD to conquer the land. Thereupon, GOD decreed that all of the people above twenty years of age (except Caleb

and Joshua) should die in the wilderness during the thirty-eight years that they should wander aimlessly without entering Canaan.

Stricken with remorse, the people tried to return and conquer the Amalekites and the Canaanites. But in Numbers 14:44 we read, "**Nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.**"

They suffered absolute defeat because the Ark of the Covenant, the means by which GOD's presence and power was manifested to them, did not go with them into battle. Thus the works which we try to do by our own self-effort will be the wood, hay, and stubble which will be burned up at the Judgment Seat of CHRIST.

But those works done in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, through CHRIST and CHRIST alone, will stand the fires of judgment as gold, silver, and precious stones.

So let us see what occurred when the Ark did go into battle with the children of Israel at the siege of Jericho. [84]

In Joshua 6:6-8, we read how the Ark of the Covenant went before the children of Israel as they marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days. And then on the seventh day came the blast of the trumpets and the shout of victory, and the walls of Jericho came down. Amen!

Hallelujah, when we walk in GOD's presence, we are able to know GOD's power for our lives.

Thus Paul could say, "**I can do all things through Christ Who strengthened me**" (Philippians 4:13).

And so also CHRIST said, "**... without me ye can do nothing**" (John 15:5).

Friend of mine, do you know GOD's presence and power in your life?

Do you have communion with GOD through the Person of JESUS CHRIST, on the basis of His atoning death and resurrection life?

Won't you now kneel by your radio there, and ask GOD to be merciful to you, a sinner, and forgive your sins on the basis of CHRIST's finished work? Let CHRIST take over your life so that you may experience the very pleasure and power of GOD, and know the rest that comes from following Him.

Do not put this off; now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. [85]

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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